***Design***

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**STEAMPUNK**

**Costumes**

**DESIGN CONCEPT:**

**\*** We have chosen a Steampunk style to complement the style of the set. For example, the steam boat on the set alludes to the steampunk theme of the costume design.

\* The steampunk style typically encompasses an Antiquated Victorian aesthetic applied to modern technologies. In the Victorian era, technology and progress weren’t taken for granted.

\* Steampunk is often described as the visual representation of an alternate earth’s 19th Century, and the character of Emperor Jones is in an “alternative universe” on the island, where he is not only a Godlike leader, but also a refugee on some sorts who fleed to the island to escape penalty in America for killing Jeff.

The theme of Jones’s detachment from his natural world is encompassed in the unique steampunk aesthetic, which looks like the familiar old Victorian style fashions combined with strange gadgets and technology-themed details (for example clothing items crafted from machinery).

\* Brutus Jones tries to cover up his heritage by assimilating into white culture and becoming the oppressor instead of the oppressed. This theme is reflected in the steampunk style choice – a typically White cultural aesthetic, with the Victorian European fashion and the Western technological advances.

\* Steampunk is typically influenced by the period of time after the Industrial Revolution. Emperor Jones is industrializing the island by creating a palace and an empire that he leads. The mixed up aesthetic of steampunk, blending the mundane with the exotic, fits with the set design.

\* The main colour palette I have worked with throughout this costume design concept is black with highlights of muted gold/brass, navy blue, bright red similar to the colour of blood, and neutral browns/greys.

**The Emperor/Brutus Jones – SCENE ONE**Costume A: Brutus’s costume is a steampunk translation of the costume directions described in the script. To add a steampunk twist to the Brutus costume, I incorporated a gas mask, which he wears before his journey into the forest. This is a particularly important feature of the costume, as it is a very literal representation of the mask that Brutus metaphorically wears as he hides his identity.

< This costume was designed by myself on a website called “Doll Divine”. **I think it is a good starting point for my vision for the Emperor Jones,** however a few other things need to be added, which are not options from the site (such as a steampunk gas mask and gun holster).

The Emperor’s costume is elaborate and Victorian in style.

The costume I have designed for Brutus’s first scene I wish to be quite true to the text: “*He wears a light blue uniform coat, sprayed with brass buttons, heavy gold chevrons on his shoulders, gold braid on the collar, cuffs, etc. His trousers are bright red with a light blue stripe down the side. Patent-leather laced boots with brass spurs, and a belt with a long-barreled, pearl-handled revolver in a holster complete with his attire.”*

This costume works with the Steampunk theme, and if I give it a bit of a Victorian elaborate twist, it fits even more so.

<http://www.dolldivine.com/lord-stevan-aristocrat.php>

The costume features a gun attached on a belt on the side of Brutus’s leg. I made this a permanent fixture of the costume because of a certain line in the play where Jones says that he won’t let anyone touch his “baby”, meaning his gun. This highlighted the importance of the gun to the character of Brutus.



Jones expresses his religious beliefs at various points within the text, such as these passages, “[I am] a man who was member in good standin’ o’ de Baptist church,” and “De Baptist Church done protect me and land dem all in hell,”.

To emphasise Brutus’s religious beliefs, I have incorporated a Victorian-style cross necklace into his costume.

**The Emperor/Brutus Jones – LATER SCENES**

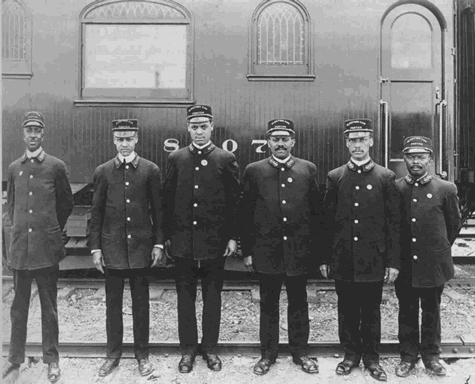
Costume B: As the script and plot progress, Brutus’s clothes end up in sad tatters, the intricate detailing of his previous steampunk-themed formalwear has all but been destroyed. The gas mask is removed at the monologue at the very beginning of Scene Two, nightfall, where Brutus catches his breath after running through the forest. The significance of the removal of the gas mask at this point in the script is that Brutus first encounters the fears here. Brutus removes his gas mask, and is then literally more vulnerable and no longer protected. It is also significant that the fears carry gas lamps, and they begin to enter the storyline and haunt Brutus the moment he removes the costume piece of the gas mask. Brutus is literally unmasked when the fears, figures and constructions of his consciousness and terror, begin to haunt him. All of the “masks” he wore in the play, the mask of the Emperor, come undone.

< This costume is a representation of a visual idea I have for the costume. I would want more tears and shreds in the costume, but still the same steampunk aesthetic – just very worn and broken at this point in time.

**The Fears**The visitations, in order from first to last, are:  
1) Creepy things – Costume D  
2) Jeff (man he killed with dice) – Costume C  
3) Chain gang (slavery Brutus was a part of in America, slaves that were bought and had to work) – Costume E  
4) Auctioneer (representing the time in Brutus’s life when he gets sold as a slave) – I’ve chosen to not include this costume in the limited number of costumes I can present to you today as a design concept, as I favoured other ones.  
5) Boat people (picked up on the island then taken to America as slaves)  
6) Witch Doctor (representing Brutus’s real heritage) – costume F

The Fears in this order literally demonstrate the deconstruction of Brutus’s sanity, as the fears go chronologically back in time to trace him back to his roots, exposing the personal destruction of his identity.

Costume C: Jeff appears in the play throwing dice. This is a callback to the cards game that enraged Brutus to the level of murder. In this way, it is a reminder to Brutus that he has recklessly gambled his life by fleeing punishment in America, and as a result his mind serves him the punishment of guilt and fear.

*Jeff is described in the text as wearing “a Pullman porter’s uniform, cap, etc”.*   
Later, Brutus says “Dey tol’ me you done died from dat razor cut I give you.”  
I have incorporated Brutus’s mutilation of Jeff into his costume – a red line of blood across Jeff’s neck is visible, dripping. **A Pullman porter’s uniform:**  


Jeff’s costume features red steampunk style dice around his neck.

Costume D: The Little Formless Fears represent Brutus’s own mortality and fears.



This costume, the creepy little formless fears, features gas lamps and long, black, flowing capes. The fears are faceless, wearing an all-body cover similar to a morph suit, disguising features and enhancing their creepy quality. The dark colour palette of this costume is not simply a reflection of evil or horror qualities, but also alludes to the literal black culture Jones is trying to suppress within himself.

From the inside of the capes, leaves and sticks drop onto the set as the Fears move. This eventually transforms the set into a more forest-like style, indicating the Emperor’s journey deeper and deeper into the mysterious forest. In this way the design of the costumes are functional, and interweave with the set design concept, which features a net of leaves atop the trees in the forest scene.



Costume E: The chain gang is the horrendous fate Brutus faced when he was sold as a slave in America. He flees from this reality by relocating himself to the West Indies, and as such, he abandoned the suffering of the other slaves. This type of fear represents Brutus’s alternate life, if he’d have stayed in America. The re-appearance of everything Brutus abandoned is a recurring theme in this play. The importance of the chain gang is that they present a people who are repressed and punished. Brutus abandoned the chain gang and went on to become an Emperor, punishing and persecuting others. The chain gang is his guilty conscience, he convinced the natives of the West Indies island that he was some kind of a God and became ruler. He went from being the oppressed to the oppressor.

A line in the text that inspired my design for the chain gang is when Brutus says “I’ll make dem look sick, I will,”.

The hospital garb of the chain gang depicts this sickness that Brutus is talking about – the sickness he has caused onto others, and escaped from when he fled America. The steampunk-styled strait jackets also further allude to the madness of Brutus, as the fears are essentially constructions of his own mind.



Costume F: The Witch Doctor is the final fear to appear in the play. It represents the culmination of Brutus’s descent into insanity. Brutus fires his precious silver bullet into the crocodile, who comes from the witch doctor. The crocodile itself has symbolism. I have combined the witch doctor and crocodile themes into the one costume. Crocodiles are metaphors for predators and threats, but even more deeply, they have an ancient lineage, which dates back to the prehistoric. This costume is based off the motif of an African heritage, Brutus’s original and “truer” identity. The Witch Doctor element of the costume and significance in the play is that it presents an illusion of “the Negro” from where Brutus comes from. He never comes to terms with his heritage, he never accepts it, he demonstrates this by trying to assimilate into white culture.

The text describes the costume like this*: “Body is stained all over with a bright red. Antelope horns are on either side of his head, branching upward. In one hand he carries a bone rattle, in the other a charm stick with a bunch of white cockatoo feathers tied to the end. A great number of glass beads and bone ornaments are about his neck, ears, wrists, and ankles.”*I like the idea of the bright red body stain, and so have incorporated it into my design. The feathers and beads are also a part of my costume design, however the antelope horns have been replaced with the top cross-section of a severed crocodile head, worn as a sort of helmet by the witch doctor.

I have adapted the costume to fit my theme by including syringes hanging about the witch doctor, almost like a needle necklace, which works with a steampunk aesthetic. In every other way, I have kept the original intent of the witch doctor representing Brutus’s heritage. As such, the witch doctor’s costume design features much less elements of the European steampunk aesthetic, and more of a tribal, African look.





My Witch Doctor costume in full design has been handed in for the Presentation.

**Henry Smithers**  
Costume G: *In the text, Smithers is described as wearing: “A worn riding suit of dirty white drill, puttees, and spurs, and wears a white cork helmet. A cartridge belt with an automatic revolver is about his waist.”*

**Smithers has the most “Victorian” and steampunk styled costume, as he is actually from England.

< Here is a design style I created online. Obviously ignore the fact it is of a woman (there were no male options!)

The steampunk look for Smithers is the strongest. A white shirt beneath a heavily adorned coat and intricate riding pants complete the ensemble. Steampunk goggles may be worn on his head to further enhance the aesthetic.



This was designed using <http://www.dolldivine.com/steampunk-costume-creator.php>

Inspiration for the Smithers costume:





**DESIGN CONCEPT:** Inspiration/Images I based my designs from: 

